

# PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

Fourteenth District, Michigan  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

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## Conyers Introduces Law to Guarantee Victims of Sexual Violence Their Day in Court

On January 28, 2003, Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee, along with 80 co-sponsors introduced the "Violence Against Women Civil Rights Restoration Act of 2003." The bill restores the ability of victims of gender-motivated violence to sue their attackers in federal court, where there is a connection to interstate commerce. In May 2000, the Supreme Court struck down a similar provision of the 1994 Violence Against Women Act. Mr. Conyers issued the following statement:

"Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, women continue to be subjected to violent, degrading, and sexually exploitive criminal activity. Women who suffer these crimes should be able to seek justice in the courts.

"In 2000, the Supreme Court struck down a provision of the 1994 Violence Against Women Act, which allowed victims of gender-motivated violence to sue their attackers in federal court. The *United States v. Morrison* case is just the latest in a series in which the Supreme Court has, in my view, improperly narrowed Congress' authority to legislate under the Commerce Clause. The Court's 5-4 majority disregarded the mountain of evidence that Congress had amassed through four years of hearings, documenting the effects of violence against women on interstate commerce. The Court's majority substituted its own judgment for that of Congress -- despite the fact that those 'conservative' Justices purport to defer to Congressional findings.

"In response to the *Morrison* decision, I introduced the 'Violence Against Women Civil Rights Restoration Act of 2003.' This legislation will restore the ability of victims of gender-motivated violence to seek justice in federal court, where there is a connection to interstate commerce. In addition, the bill authorizes the Attorney General to prevent discrimination in the investigation and prosecution of gender-based crimes. The bill will ensure that victims have fair and equal access to the courts in cases of gender-based violence."

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